

Bob's Blog—June 18th, 2007

I hope all the fathers in the department had a wonderful day on Sunday. For Twins fans it was another one of those memorable moments in the bottom of the ninth and WHACK! Game over. Twins Win!

1.) I know you are all interested in the budget challenge and how it will affect each of us in the coming months. First, the Mayor and the Administration are faced with a huge hole to fill and they are resolved to avoid as many personnel displacements as possible. DSI has been asked to help in that regard by holding open as many vacancies as possible until the exact budget numbers are known later in July. This is the reason for the temporary hiring restrictions. We will be asking for permission to hire one Animal Control Officer to replace Dennis Swenson who retired last week. Otherwise we want to stand pat until more is known. We are also in the process of preparing for an increase in fees. Many of our fees, such as liquor licenses, have not been increased in more than 10 years.

The Mayor's strategy to lessen the personal impact of the budget shortage is to provide options for those whose current city jobs may be eliminated. The greatest vulnerability is for positions in the general fund. I have been through a lot of budget cycles over the years but this one is stacking up to be one of the hardest. Nevertheless, I am impressed by the hard work being done by the Mayor and budget staff to find solutions to lessen the impact on services and the lives of employees.

When I was laid off from the City on March 13th, 2003, the process was difficult and painful. Chris Coleman was the only member of the City Council who wrote me a personal letter and thanked me for my years with the City and noted what a tragedy it was for the City to lose so many talented people at the time. That's a letter I will never forget. Furthermore, being laid off is something that I will work to avoid for as many others as possible, and the Mayor feels the same as I do.

2.) The purchase of a new building in or near downtown has been put on hold for about 9 months. We'll see what the future looks like next Spring to determine whether we can continue to look for new space to house the whole department. In the meantime Fire Inspections will be moving into the Commerce Building before the end of the summer.

3.) The DSI DRAFT Strategic Plan is currently being reviewed by employees and our internal and external stakeholders, including the AFCME LMC. We are on track to have the plan in final form on or before July 12th. Thanks to LeeAnn Turchin, and the Senior Managers (Kessler, Rozek, Gunther, Riddering, Lippert, Zaccard, Reed, and Humphrey) for all your hard work.

4.) Phil Owens and Mark Kaisersatt have been asked to serve as Co-Transition Leaders to oversee the implementation of the strategic plan. I am pleased to report that both have agreed to serve in a temporary position for at least the next 12 months. Bill Gunther and Steve Zaccard have agreed to reassign a majority of their current duties to free up their time to devote to the implementation and transition process. We will be seeking approval of a temporary out-of-class assignment for both. Phil and Mark bring expertise, experience, and enthusiasm to their new assignment, and I am very pleased to have their assistance in implementing our strategic plan. Phil and Mark will be starting their new assignments around July 15th.

Open Office Hour is still being held on Monday mornings. Next week it will be from 8:00 to 9:00; otherwise it's usually from 9:00 to 10:00. Stop in if you have an idea or concern that you want to discuss. No appointment needed.

Thanks for your continued support as we work to make DSI *the leader in creating the safest, healthiest, most livable city in America.*"

Bob